

HOW TO PRAY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH COVID-19

“Lord, teach us to pray”—it’s the only time the disciples specifically ask Jesus to teach them anything. If you were to ask Jesus to teach you one thing today, would it be that? We often talk to our young people about how important it is to pray, but rarely do we teach them how. Right now our young people are more acutely aware of the need to pray in this crisis and so we find ourselves with a unique opportunity to teach them how to pray both together online and also privately. Covid-19 and the current global climate means youth work has moved online and we are all learning to innovate and reimagine how we do things. This resource aims to equip you to help your young people to pray as you continue to invest in their faith development.

ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Let’s be honest, all this online zooming and video calling can be pretty awkward at the best of times. Add prayer into the mix and the awkwardness goes through the roof. As one young person pointed out, “We don’t like praying out loud normally in a group, so it’s the same on zoom.” So here are some top tips to navigate the awkwardness and help our young people pray...

ZOOM TIPS

Give clear explanations of how it's going to work.

Ensure you are the host and point person on your call.

Mute all and let people unmute themselves when they are going to speak or pray out loud.

Have an open time of prayer and don't be afraid to give space and time for young people to pray.

Lead meditation on a passage and get each of them to feedback what stands out to them, and let that shape your prayers. Building ownership and engagement from the beginning.

Use icebreakers before jumping into prayer.

01 OWN THE AWKWARDNESS

Acknowledge that this is awkward. Embrace the fact that there will be awkward silences, and let your young people know it’s okay to find it strange as they try to pray.

02 DON'T ASSUME ANYTHING

Make no assumptions about the prayer lives of your young people. Sometimes those who’ve been around church most, find prayer most intimidating, while the new kid feels totally comfortable praying out loud. Ensure your young people feel safe by letting them know they can opt out at any time, and they don’t have to do anything (eg praying out loud) they aren’t comfortable with yet.

03 KEEP IT SIMPLE

Simplicity is your best friend right now. Don’t overcomplicate things. Stick to simple prayer prompts and teach your young people to pray simply and directly.

“And when you come before God, don’t turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for stardom! Do you think God sits in a box seat? Here’s what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won’t be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage...”

Matthew 6:5-6 (MSG)

04 LIMIT DISTRACTION

Having other people watch you pray can be off-putting and a major distraction for some young people. Take away that anxiety by encouraging the young people to turn off their screens while you pray together.

05 HAVE SET TIMES

Start with small prayer times that you can gradually increase. Have a leader open, leave a couple of minutes of space for others to pray, and then another leader closes. The amount of space left for others to pray can then be increased a little each week. We want the young people to feel that the prayer times develop, rather than starting off too long.

06 MODEL HOW TO PRAY

Most of us learn how to pray by imitating others. Let your young people hear you pray, remembering to keep it simple, keep it real and keep it short.

07 CREATE RHYTHMS

Encourage your young people to build prayer into their life as part of a daily rhythm. Some of them may already have a rhythm of prayer eg before meals or at bedtime. You could have a daily set time as a youth group when you pray individually wherever you are. Either give them prompts via social media each day, or simply encourage them to pray the Our Father/Lord's Prayer as part of their rhythm.

08 DON'T ALWAYS SAY IT

You don't always have to encourage them to say their prayers out loud. Why not get them writing or drawing prayers and holding them up to the screen? Or on zoom use the chat box feature to encourage your young people to share prayer requests, and pray for one another.

09 GET LITURGICAL

Sometimes providing written prayers can be helpful in offering language for our prayers. Screen share prayers on zoom that your youth group can then say together.

10 BE CREATIVE

Offer the opportunity for your young people to explore different ways of connecting with God through prayer. Prayer activities can be a fun way for young people to pray while having something tangible to focus their prayers. You could use prayer activities online by letting young people know in advance what items they'll need. Then do the activity together when you meet online.

Alternatively guide them through prayer activities while you do them on Instagram or facebook live.

OTHER RESOURCES

prayerspacesinschools.com | Sign up for a free account and get access to tons of prayer activities. We've also adapted lots of our activities to be used at home, and there's also some Covid-19 specific activities.

[Origins Youth Prayer Course](#) | This 7 week course will help you teach young people how to pray. You can buy it for £5 (+P&P) at 24-7prayer.com/origins and while you wait for your hard copy to arrive, they'll send you a PDF of the leader's manual.

[Lectio365](#) | A daily devotional app that helps you pray the Bible every day. They recently covered a series on the Coronavirus. Its audio as well as text based, so you can listen along. Get more info [here](#) or find it on the app/play store.

[24-7 Prayer Coronavirus Resources](#) | Range of resources specific to the current pandemic, including written prayers, family-friendly prayers, prayer guides and more. Get them [here](#).

unite714.com | Encourage young people to join this global wave of prayer for healing from Coronavirus and for an awakening among the nations. There's also a different prayer to pray each week.

SIMPLE PRAYER PROMPTS

- What are you thankful for?
- One question you would ask God if he were here right now?
- What is one thing that is worrying you?
- How do you feel about Coronavirus? (use emojis to answer/pray)
- Name anyone you know who is sick. asking God to heal and comfort them.
- Think of any key workers you know and pray for them.
- Who are our leaders? Pray God will give them wisdom.
- What are you hoping for beyond this crisis?